

RESTAURANT GUIDE

Dining Al Fresco is 'cool' way to enjoy outdoors

In summer, we enjoy northern Michigan the most when we enjoy it outdoors — at the beach, on the water, on a trail in a hardwood forest, or smacking a little white ball around the countryside.

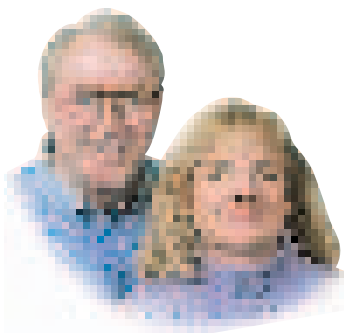
There's no reason to give up the great outdoors when it's time for dinner. The Italians even have a word for it: Al fresco. Translated literally, it means "cool," but food lovers have long used the term to refer to "outdoor dining."

Up North, where dinner-time finds the sun still high in the sky, it's a perfect fit because, in the heat of summer, dining outdoors truly is cool. So "bravo!" to all the Northern Michigan restaurants that acknowledge our outdoors urges by offering summertime dining al fresco. Both food-wise and style-wise, there's something for everyone.

Not surprisingly, some of the very best al fresco dining is harborside. The Cove, in the heart of Leland's Fishtown, has a breezy deck overlooking the old power dam on one side and the docks on the other. Beyond lie Lake Michigan and the Manitous and glorious sunsets. Food tip: "Campfire Whitefish," baked in foil with peppers and onions, or seafood chowder.

Another harborside delight is Scott's Harbor Grill, whose outdoor deck overlooks Traverse City's Harbor West marina at M-22 and Cherry Bend Road. Suggestion: lightly battered perch or BBQ ribs and a glass of crisp white from a local winery.

THE CONNOISSEUR UP NORTH



SHERRI & GRAYDON DECAMP

Kim White's Coho Café in Frankfort is a hip, cool bistro with big new deck overlooking the harbor and an interesting menu that ranges from the Pacific Rim to the Mediterranean.

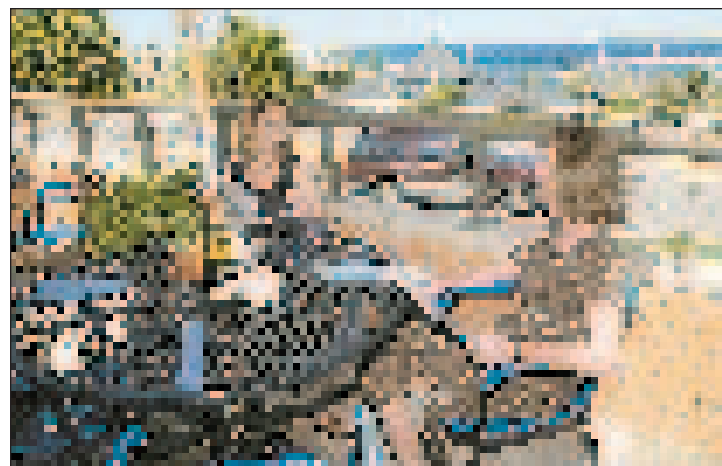
More yachts are yours to watch at Latitude, at the foot of Main Street in the Marina District of posh Bay

Harbor. Transparent screens shelter the spacious patio from even the most brisk of onshore breezes. We think the way to enjoy Chef Rich Travis' fare to the hilt is by grazing on a variety of appetizers rather than blowing it all on just one entrée.

Traverse City's Amical offers an entirely different sort of al fresco dining: a decidedly urban sidewalk café where you can watch the world go by over a meal that starts with some savory, baked pastry twists stuffed with feta and tapenade and ends after some earthy, Basque-style braised lamb with lemon, cinnamon, tomato and garlic potatoes.

The urban-outdoors spot in Charlevoix is the canopied roof at Whitney's, overlooking the charming Round Lake yacht basin. At Whitecaps in Petoskey you

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Michelle Burian, left, and Carol Markey of Harbor Springs relax on Whitecaps' outdoor patio in Petoskey.

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